



NORTH DAKOTA
DEPARTMENT *of* HEALTH

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
September 26, 2005

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State Health Department Releases Mid-Year 2005 HIV Infection Numbers

BISMARCK, N.D. – Three newly diagnosed HIV infections were reported to the North Dakota Department of Health during the first six months of 2005, according to the department's July-August *North Dakota Epidemiology Report*. Nine new infections were reported for this time period in 2004. Since confidential HIV case reporting began in North Dakota in 1984, 351 HIV infections have been reported in the state through June 2005.

"North Dakota's incidence of new HIV infections remains the lowest in the United States," said Denise Steinbach, HIV/AIDS Surveillance coordinator for the Department of Health. "Unfortunately, this may provide false security for North Dakota residents who engage in unprotected sexual contact or needle-sharing activities – behaviors that put people at risk for HIV infection."

According to Steinbach, people incorrectly assume that North Dakota does not have HIV because the number of HIV infections is low. "That low perception of risk offsets the fact that we have the same behaviors that put people at risk occurring here in North Dakota that also occur in more populated states," Steinbach said. "The challenge for our HIV education and prevention efforts in North Dakota is maintaining a high level of awareness and emphasizing the importance of HIV testing and knowing your status."

According to the report, new infections diagnosed were primarily in people ages 20 through 39. Male-to-male unprotected sexual contact continues to account for about one-half of all HIV infections reported, and heterosexual unprotected sexual contact and injecting drug use for about one-fourth. The complete summary may be found in the July-August 2005 *North Dakota Epidemiology Report* at www.health.state.nd.us/disease/Newsletters/EpiReport/EpiReportArchives.htm.

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Visit the health department home page at www.ndhealth.gov.

The North Dakota Department of Health strongly encourages those at risk for HIV through unprotected sexual contact or needle-sharing activities to seek HIV testing. For more information about HIV and free HIV testing locations, call 800.70.NDHIV or visit www.ndhiv.com.

-- 30 --

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